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Johnson TV Interview Abridged at His Request

Deletion Is Said to Have Cast Doubt on Findings of the Warren Commission

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 28 — The Columbia Broadcasting System said today that its forthcoming television interview with former President Johnson had had material cut out, at Mr. Johnson's request, on the ground of national security.

The network declined to confirm or deny published reports that in the deleted film Mr. Johnson expressed fundamental doubts about the Warren Commission's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald was the "single assassin," acting alone, in the death of President Kennedy.

Richard S. Salant, president of C.B.S. News, said in a brief statement today that he had acceded to the cuts, in accordance with a prior agreement that Mr. Johnson could review his remarks after filming and "delete comments involving national security."

Other sources at C.B.S. said that the trimmed film involved potential embarrassment to Mr. Johnson but not national security. They also said that in an intense battle within the C.B.S. organization, Mr. Salant had adamantly opposed the abridgment of the Johnson interview.

The former President was unavailable for comment on the matter.

Set for Saturday Night

The interview with Mr. Johnson, the third in a series of video memoirs with Walter Cronkite, is called "L.B.J.: Tragedy and Transition" and deals with the events in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, the day President Kennedy was shot, and the early weeks of Mr. Johnson's succession. The interview will be broadcast over the C.B.S. TV network on Saturday night.

At the close of the last interview, broadcast on Feb. 6, Mr. Johnson told Mr. Cronkite, in a preview of Saturday's program: "Getting back to the Texas trip, I say much was written about that trip to Texas, Walter, and from my personal knowledge most of what's been written was wrong. And I think most of it was deliberate."

C.B.S. officials later stated that the final version of the new interview contained no comments on the Warren Commission's conclusions.

None of the men who worked on the Johnson intrview were available for comment today, including Mr. Cronkite, Burton Benjamin, the executive producer of the series, Mr. Salant and Dr. Frank Stanton, the president of C.B.S. and a close friend of Mr. Johnson who reportedly arranged the TV autobiography.

Comment on Dallas Cited

Sources at C.B.S. and close to the network's management said that in the original interview, filmed in Texas earlier this year, Mr. Johnson said that he had never entirely dismissed doubts and questions about the Kennedy assassination.

Ae he has also reportedly confided to friends, Mr. Johnson was understood to have told Mr. Cronkite that he was not absolutely convinced that Oswald acted alone, and also that in the immediate aftermath of the shooting in Dallas he was concerned that the assassination might have been part of a larger international conspiracy.

About three weeks ago, sources said, Mr. Johnson thought better of the remarks and asked that they be cut out.

Mr. Johnson's request was reported to have touched off a controversy within C. B. S., with most of the news staff, including Mr. Salant, arrayed against the change.

C. B. S. officials have said that the network's contract for the interviews gave Mr. Johnson no general editing privilege.

Yet according to the judgment that ultimately prevailed, he had a clear right to strike out comments affecting national security, and he was the only person in a position to rule when national security was involved.